

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property
Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
7 October 2004 (07.10.2004)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2004/086165 A2

- (51) International Patent Classification⁷: **G06F**
- (21) International Application Number:
PCT/IL2004/000273
- (22) International Filing Date: 25 March 2004 (25.03.2004)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data:
155095 26 March 2003 (26.03.2003) IL
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- (81) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every
kind of national protection available*): AE, AG, AL, AM,

AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN,
CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI,
GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE,
KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD,
MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NA, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG,
PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SY, TJ, TM,
TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM,
ZW.

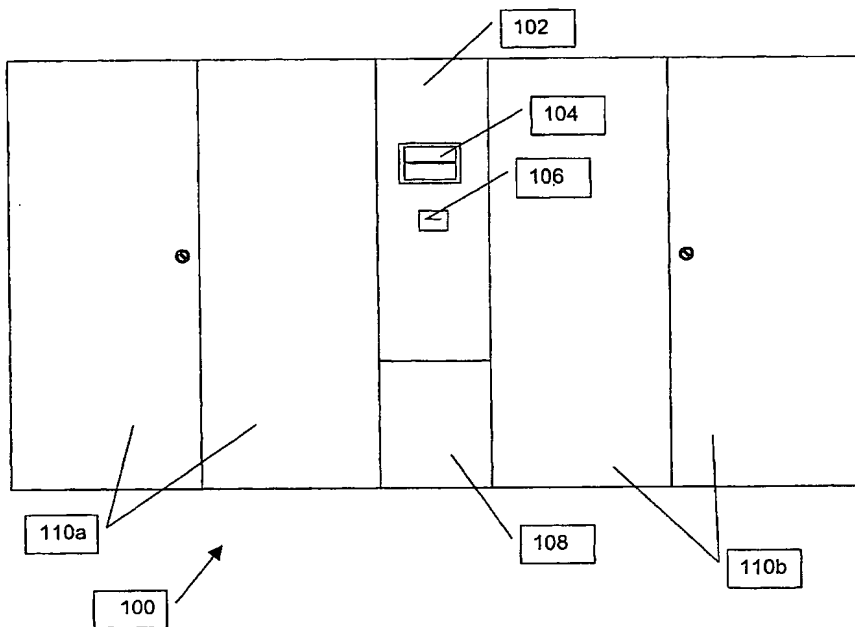
- (84) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every
kind of regional protection available*): ARIPO (BW, GH,
GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW),
Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), Euro-
pean (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR,
GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK,
TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW,
ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— without international search report and to be republished
upon receipt of that report

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: INTERACTIVE AUTOMATED ARTICLE DISPENSING SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: Disclosed is an interactive automated system for dispensing cloth articles, the principles of which may be readily adapted for use in systems for dispensing a wide variety of articles suitable for distribution by use of a vending style device, such as, but not limited to hospital scrub outfits, clean rooms suits, towels, blankets, sweat suits, t-shirts, socks, underwear, under shirts, ties, scarves, hats, and rain suits. Further, systems of the present invention will be of benefit to a variety of institutions and outlets, such as, but not limited to, hospitals, hotels, motels, resorts, health clubs, country clubs, swimming pools, college and university dormitories, shopping malls, tourist attractions, sport stadiums and arena, fair ground, sport shops, factories, laboratories and the like. The general principles

of the present invention include: providing an article dispensing device; receiving a user order; ascertaining if the order may be fulfilled by the dispensing device at which such order was placed; if "yes", then fulfilling the order; and if "no" providing an alternative ordering solution based on the user's requested order and information from a system wide database. The alternative ordering solutions may include an alternate article from the dispensing device at which the order is received, the location of an alternate dispensing device at which the desired article may be obtained, or a request that the user return a used article to an associated return device. The system may be configured for loaning articles with the intention that the articles be returned. Alternatively, the system may be configured for vending articles.



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